

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-02 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
SSM-05 IO-14 AID-05 NEAE-00 /077 W
-----092981 141338Z /43

P R 141119Z SEP 77
FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4813
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
USINT BAGHDAD
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
USIA WASHDC

UNCLAS SECTION 1 OF 2 DAMASCUS 5848

USIA FOR INA

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, MARR, SY
SUBJECT: SYRIAN MEDIA COMMENTARY ON U.S. PEACE EFFORTS

1. SUMMARY: SYRIAN PRESS FAVORABLY REPORTED USG STATEMENT ON PALESTINIAN PARTICIPATION AT GENEVA AND POSITIVE PALESTINIAN REACTION. SOMBER NOTE WAS ADDED, HOWEVER, IN REPORTS OF NEGATIVE SOVIET REACTION. EDITORIALS AND ARTICLES ARE MIXED BUT OPENED THE DOOR A BIT WIDER FOR U.S. MEDIATION THAN HAS BEEN THE CASE IN RECENT WEEKS. END SUMMARY.

2. BOTH DAMASCUS DAILIES PUBLISHED SEPTEMBER 13 GAVE PROMINENT FRONT PAGE COVERAGE TO HODDING CARTER'S STATEMENTS THAT U.S. BELIEVES IT NECESSARY FOR PALESTINIANS TO BE INVOLVED IN THE PEACE PROCESS AND REPRESENTED AT GENEVA. AL-BAATH HEADED ARTICLE: "WASHINGTON CONFIRMS IN STATE-
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MENT THE NECESSITY OF PALESTINIAN PARTICIPATION IN THE PEACE PROCESS:" WHILE TISHRIIN CAPTIONED: "AMBIGUOUS AMERICAN INVITATION FOR THE PARTICIPATION OF THE PALESTINIANS IN THE GENEVA CONFERENCE."

2. TISHRIIN SAID: "THE US STATE DEPARTMENT ANNOUNCED OFFICIALLY FOR THE FIRST TIME YESTERDAY THAT IT IS NECESSARY

TO HAVE PALESTINIAN REPRESENTATION AT THE GENEVA MEPC BUT D8D NOT REFER TO THE PLO AS THE LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE." ARTICLE FURTHER NOTED THAT THE STATEMENT INDICATES IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO IGNORE THE PALESTINIAN ISSUE IF WHAT IS WANTED IS A SOLUTION FOR THE OTHER ASPECTS OF THE MIDDLE EAST ISSUE. BOTH PAPERS MENTIONED THE FURTHER PROVISIO THAT ALL PARTIES AT THE GENEVA CONFERENCE MUST COMPLY WITH UNSC RESOLUTIONS 242 AND 338, AND NOTED THAT US WOULD IMMEDIATELY HOLD DIALOGUE WITH PLO IF IT PROCLAIMS ITS ACCEPTANCE OF UNSC 242. PAPER PUBLISHED AFP DESPATCH WHICH REPORTED THAT "CIRCLES CLOSELY CONNECTED TO PLO IN PARIS WELCOMED THE STATEMENT WHICH UNDERLINES THE NEED FOR PALESTINIAN PARTICIPATION IN GENEVA CONFERENCE AND CONSIDERED IT VERY ENCOURAGING."

3. ONLY PAPER PUBLISHED SEPTEMBER 14 (AL-BAATH) CONTINUED UPBEAT COVERAGE OF US STATEMENT IN FRONT PAGE ARTICLE SUMMARIZING VARIOUS REACTIONS. PROMINENT AMONG REACTIONS WAS PALESTINE NEWS AGENCY REPORT THAT ARAFAT WELCOMED US STATEMENT. IT ADDED THAT ARAFAT BELIEVES THIS STATEMENT CONSTITUTES A POSITIVE STEP TOWARD THE ESTABLISHMENT OF LASTING PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST, BECAUSE IT ACKNOWLEDGES THE PLACE THE PALESTINIAN PROBLEM OCCUPIES IN THE ME CONFLICT. NEVERTHELESS, AL-BAATH ALSO GAVE FULL COVERAGE TO NEGATIVE SOVIET REACTION CLAIMING TASS CENSURE IS ATTRIBUTABLE TO FACT STATEMENT UNCLASSIFIED

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IGNORES THE PLO WHICH IS THE SOLE LEGITIMATE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE.

4. EDITORIALS AND ARTICLES SEPTEMBER 14 ARE MIXED IN TREATMENT OF US BUT REPRESENT MARKED IMPROVEMENT OVER OFTEN BITTER CRITICISM WE HAVE SEEN IN PAST FEW WEEKS. THE AL-BAATH EDITORIAL SAID: "ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF THE NEED FOR PALESTINIAN PARTICIPATION IN MAKING PEACE SHOULD BE FOLLOWED BY WASHINGTON'S RECOGNITION OF THE PLO. ALL THE SAME, RECOGNITION IS NO MORE THAN A FULL DEFINITION OF THE PARTIES TO THE CONFLICT, WHICH WOULD FACILITATE THE FORMALITIES IN CONVENING GENEVA. BUT IT DOES NOT GUARANTEE SUCCESS. FOR THE CONFERENCE TO BE SUCCESSFUL, THE US SHOULD DEFINE ITS POSITION CLEARLY REGARDING THIS MATTER. IT SHOULD ALSO INFORM ISRAEL OF ITS POSITION, AS IT HAS NOW ISRAEL'S TOTAL REJECTION OF THE COMPONENTS OF PEACE. OTHERWISE, THE LATEST ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF THE NEED FOR PALESTINIAN PARTICIPATION IN THE PEACE MAKING PROCESS WOULD BE NOTHING MORE THAN A MANEUVER DESIGNED TO FOG OVER THE MIDDLE EAST ISSUE AS IT IS ABOUT TO BE RAISED IN THE UNS, FOR THE PURPOSE OF MODERATING THE DEBATES AND ABORTING ANY RESOLUTIONS DENOUNCING ISRAEL AND

SUPPORTING ARAB RIGHTS.

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5. AN ARTICLE BY ABOU YA'RUB SAID: "WE HOPE THAT WHAT HAS
APPEARED IN THE STATE DEPARTMENT'S STATEMENT IS SERIOUS
THIS TIME, EVEN THOUGH IT IS SOMEWHAT VAGUE, SINCE IT DID
NOT INDICATE THAT THE PLO IS THE LEGITIMATE REPRESENTATIVE
OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE, NOR DID IT SPELL OUT WHERE
AND HOW THE PALESTINIAN HOMELAND WOULD BE ESTABLISHED. IT MIGHT BE
FEARED THAT THIS NEW STATEMENT IS AN EXTENSION OF THE PREVIOUS
AMERICAN STANDS WHICH ACTUALLY STARTED IN 1967 AND HAVE NOT
YET ENDED, SINCE IT HAS BEEN PROVEN THAT THEIR AIMS ARE
ONE, AND HAVEN'T CHANGED, EVEN IF THE MANEUVERS HAVE CHANGED."
ANOTHER COMMENT WAS PENNED BY MAJID
MU'OMMAD: "WHILE WORLD CIRCLES AFFIRM THAT IT IS ISRAEL
WHO IS HINDERING THE PEACE PROCESS, THE SUG IS ALSO TO BE
HELD RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS, ON ACCOUNT OF ITS POLITICAL,
MILITARY, AND ECONOMIC BACKING OF ISRAEL, AND IT SUPPLYING
ISRAEL WITH THE MEANS ENABLING IT TO PERSIST IN ITS
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EXPANSIONIST POLICY AND IN ITS DEFIANCE OF THE
OPINIONS OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY."

6. COMMENT: SYRIAN MEDIA TREATMENT OF US PEACE EFFORTS
HAVE HAD A ROLLER COASTER QUALITY OF LATE WITH SOMEWHAT
MORE DOWNS THAN UPS. SYRIA'S EDITORIAL WRITERS, NO
DOUBT, ARE AFRAID TO LEND TOO MUCH CREDENCE TO POSITIVE
USG STATEMENTS FOR FEAR THAT NOTHING WILL COME OF THEM.
NEVERTHELESS, THE RECEPTIVITY FOR US INITIATIVES IS
CLEARLY GREATER TODAY THAN IT HAS BEEN FOR SOME WEEKS, AND A FEW
EXPRESSIONS OF HOPE HAVE REPLACED THE NEAR TOTAL
CYNICISM WE HAVE RECENTLY BEEN WITNESSING..
MURPHY

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